United Nations A/C.5/59/SR.22

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session
Official Records

Distr.: General
18 November 2004

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 November 2004, at 2.30 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. Lock (Vice-Chairman) ..... (South Africa)
later: Mr. MacKay (Chairman) ..... (New Zealand)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Kuznetsov

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In the absence of Mr. MacKay (New Zealand), Ms. Lock (South Africa), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 2.35 p.m.

Agenda item 109: Programme planning (A/59/6 (Programmes 1-26) and A/59/6 (Part One)/Corr.1, A/59/16, A/59/69, A/59/79 and A/59/87)

1. **Ms. Udo** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), introducing the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) on its forty-fourth session (A/59/16), said that the session had taken place in the context of the ongoing reform of the United Nations, including reform of the budgetary process, and had also provided CPC with an opportunity to look at ways of improving its working methods. The budget cycle was to be reformed and any duplication in intergovernmental review eliminated. The General Assembly, in resolution 58/269, had assigned additional responsibilities to CPC for its forty-fourth session, namely to consider a strategic framework to replace the four-year medium-term plan, which was to comprise a part one, or plan outline, reflecting the longer-term objectives of the Organization, and a part two, or a biennial programme plan, to cover the two-year period under consideration. The tasks of CPC at its forty-fourth session had therefore been: to review the strategic framework for 26 programmes for the period 2006-2007; to identify issues in the context of the strategic framework that required assessment by the Secretariat; to consider the issue of priority-setting; to examine the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003; to review evaluation matters and coordination questions; and to consider ways of improving its working methods.

2. A debt of gratitude was due to the members of CPC for their efforts, as well as to the observers and the members of the Secretariat. The report on the session had been prepared in the format to which members of the Fifth Committee were accustomed. She had been intending to submit, both to the Economic and Social Council and to the Fifth Committee, a more reader-friendly document but, for reasons beyond her control, that had not proved possible. One of the critical roles conferred on CPC had been to review the programmatic aspects of the budget to ensure that the short- and long-term objectives of the Organization and the overall direction of programmes were properly respected and reflected in budgetary considerations. The new two-year budget process delinked resources from programmes. The fact that the strategic frameworks had been submitted with no benchmarks that CPC could use as guidelines had made its work more difficult and cumbersome.

3. The Committee had had before it for its consideration the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007, Part One being the plan outline and Part Two the biennial programme plan. Of the 26 programmes, the Committee had made recommendations on 21. In particular, it had decided to recommend that the General Assembly should allocate five programmes to the relevant Main Committees for review and action: programme 3, Disarmament, was to be reviewed by the First Committee; programme 10: Trade and development, consideration of which had been delayed to permit UNCTAD to conclude its meeting and comment on the proposed strategic framework, was to be considered by the Second Committee, while the Third Committee would consider programme 19: Human rights. The Fourth Committee was to review programme 23: Public information, while the Fifth Committee was to consider programme 25: Internal oversight in the context of its scheduled mandatory five-year review of the work of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. It was also expected that, after review, the Main Committees would forward the programmes allocated to them to the Fifth Committee for its consideration in the context of the overall strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 under the agenda item entitled "Programme planning". CPC had also recommended that the General Assembly should review Part One, the plan outline, at its fifty-ninth session. After a detailed and extensive discussion of the plan outline, CPC had decided that more time should be devoted by the General Assembly to its consideration and that the Secretariat should provide further details in that connection. CPC had also decided that it would continue its consideration of the item on priority-setting at its forty-fifth session and recommended that the General Assembly should postpone its consideration of that report to its sixtieth session.

4. On the issue of the programme performance of the United Nations for the period 2002-2003, the Committee had commended the Office of Internal Oversight Services on its report which had been presented for the first time in results-based budget

format. It had appreciated the improved format of the report and the increased emphasis on results rather than simply on inputs and outputs. The programme performance report had afforded CPC the opportunity, for the first time, to evaluate how programme managers applied the results-based logical framework and how they were able to articulate programme implementation in terms of results achieved. While CPC recognized that the report was a work in progress and represented an improvement in performance reporting, it nevertheless emphasized the need for all programme managers fully to implement the relevant resolutions, paying attention to the regulations and rules related to results-based budgeting and management. It had also recommended that future reporting on programme performance should be more closely aligned with the objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement.

5. The Committee for Programme and Coordination had recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to continue to provide overall support and guidance to all departments in managing for results and had also requested that future reports on programme performance should include a brief description of challenges, obstacles and unmet goals, so as to facilitate the evaluation by CPC of issues affecting programme performance.

6. On the subject of evaluation, CPC had recommended that the programmes of the proposed strategic framework should be considered in conjunction with the corresponding section of the programme performance report. However, as the latter covered the period 2002-2003, whereas the strategic framework covered the period 2006-2007, CPC had recommended that the Secretariat should formally present updated information on the relevant parts of the programme performance report on the understanding that such updated information would also be considered. It had also emphasized that the assessment of past programme performance should reflect significant external factors that might have affected the achievements of various programmes, as required by paragraphs 13 and 14 of General Assembly resolution 55/231.

7. On the issue of strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives, CPC had decided to select the theme of "political affairs" for its in-depth evaluation in 2006. While commending OIOS on the candid way in which issues affecting programme performance had been covered, CPC had requested that future reports on in-depth evaluations and thematic evaluations, as well as triennial reviews, should include a brief section on questions in which intergovernmental guidance and follow-up by CPC or other appropriate intergovernmental bodies would be useful. That section should focus on practical and policy issues which could not be solved by the Secretariat alone and would therefore require cooperation with intergovernmental bodies.

8. Concerning coordination issues, the Committee had urged the Chief Executives Board for Coordination of the United Nations System to intensify inter-agency cooperation and exchange of information on practices in measuring programme performance and results, productivity in service functions and in collaboration on conference management. It had also recommended that the General Assembly should revert to the issue of the establishment of the Senior Management Service at its fifty-ninth session under the agenda item "United Nations common system".

9. One issue which the General Assembly had entrusted to CPC for consideration, namely improving the working methods of CPC, had been discussed with respect to quality and timeliness in documentation, conduct of meetings, possible clustering of issues for discussion, changing the format of the CPC report and other issues but, owing to serious time constraints, CPC had been unable to finalize those discussions and had decided that it would take up the issue as a matter of priority at the beginning of its forty-fifth session.

10. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) introduced the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 (A/59/6 (Programmes 1-26)), which had been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 58/269 and with the legislative mandates that required action to be taken by the Member States and by the Secretariat to meet the challenges facing the Organization. The proposed strategic framework comprised 26 programmes each of which was entrusted with the responsibility for attaining tangible results. As the programme performance report, which would be introduced later, showed, considerable advances had been made in the past two years: tension had been alleviated, political settlements had been achieved, international standards had been observed, and agreements had been reached on matters relating to sustainable development, environment, trade and

investment. There had also been improved development in Africa, life-saving assistance had been provided to some 45 million victims of conflict, drought and other emergencies, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime had come into force and the reform in the Secretariat had yielded greater efficiency and effectiveness.

11. At the same time, there were still many urgent challenges to be met and persistent problems to be addressed. The programmes in the strategic framework were designed to enable the Secretariat to manage its work better and to achieve results, rather than merely to deliver outputs and services. While the Secretariat must continue to improve its efficiency, efficiency was not enough: the Secretariat must also strive to become more effective not only for the benefit of those whom the United Nations served but also to make the Organization stronger. The strategic framework was one of the instruments that guided the work of the Organization as a whole. Part One highlighted the longer-term objectives and the priorities to be designated, while Part Two presented the biennial programme plan for all the 26 programmes of the Organization.

12. When the Committee came to deliberate on the issue it would receive good advice from CPC but, at the same time, the Committee should also bear in mind that legislative mandates were addressed to Governments, intergovernmental bodies, organizations in the United Nations system and other entities, as well as to the Secretary-General. The responsibility for the success of the Organization's programmes was neither the exclusive preserve of the Member States acting individually, nor that of intergovernmental bodies or of the Secretariat; the responsibility was a collective one.

13. The report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting (A/59/87) described the experience with priority-setting since the introduction of programme planning and budgeting over 35 years previously and also dealt with the historical background to priority-setting. As its Chairman had already mentioned, CPC had recommended that discussion of priority-setting should be deferred until the following year to give it an opportunity to look at the matter in greater detail.

14. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/59/79), said that the report, the eighth in a series, presented an overview of the Secretariat's current evaluation capacity, analysed the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives, provided an account of two pilot projects undertaken in 2003 to explore the use of self-evaluation within a results-based framework and summarized the actions taken by the Secretariat in response to action 21 (e) of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387).

15. As far as evaluation capacity was concerned, the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had concluded that there were reasonably sound institutional arrangements and evaluation practices in place. However, improvements were required in a number of areas in order to strengthen capacity. In that connection, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/269, there was a need for clearer identification of resources allocated for monitoring and evaluation in all sections of the budget. To that end, managers should assess their monitoring and evaluation needs and also revisit the organizational placement of that particular function in their respective programmes.

16. The programme budget instructions issued in September had followed up on the proposals made in the report. As part of their programme budget submissions for the period 2006-2007, programme managers would be required to provide a record of self-evaluation activities undertaken in the previous biennium and to submit evaluation plans together with a clear identification of resources to be used for evaluation.

17. In order to ensure that evaluation was approached in a more uniform manner throughout the Secretariat, OIOS had prepared a comprehensive online glossary of evaluation terminology, which would be available in November, and intended to produce an updated evaluation manual by January 2005. In addition, the report proposed a number of new measures designed to modernize and update the central evaluation function so as to enable it to develop standards and training materials, oversee, organize and facilitate training and serve as a repository and disseminator of best practices. Since those activities could not be undertaken within current resources, the proposals

would need to be considered in the context of the budgeting exercise for 2006-2007.

18. The report also described actions currently under way in the Secretariat to refine the current timeline for the planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycles in order to maximize synergies, enhance the role of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS), ensure that senior managers provided leadership, commitment and support for monitoring and evaluation activities, upgrade evaluation resources and planning, improve the coherence and clarity of evaluation methodology and strengthen the central evaluation capacity. The Committee for Programme and Coordination had considered the proposals and had, inter alia, echoed the need to strengthen the support provided by intergovernmental bodies and recommended that the political affairs programme should be the subject of in-depth evaluation in 2006.

19. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/59/69), he said that, at its forty-fourth session, CPC had taken note of the improved format of the programme performance report and had commended the innovative approach used in formatting and distributing it. The thirteenth biennial report was in fact very different from its predecessors: its content was focused on results and it was presented in both printed and electronic versions. The report's content had been arranged in accordance with the results-based paradigm approved by the General Assembly. With that strong methodological base and the enhancement of results-based management by means of training exercises, the report was considerably more detailed and substantiated.

20. The report was 25 per cent shorter than the report for the biennium 2000-2001, and almost nine tenths of it was devoted to results achieved. Its dual presentation also helped to make the printed version as concise as possible, and the 100 or so hyperlinks in the electronic copy allowed the reader to view other documents.

21. The biennium under consideration had witnessed a wide variety of outcomes of the Organization's activities. The key results were highlighted in Part One of the report and were described in much more detail within each budget section in Part Two. The implementation rate of the 33,131 quantifiable outputs had been 84 per cent, one point higher than in the preceding biennium. The level of additions (4,894 outputs) was slightly higher, and 1.9 per cent of total outputs had been postponed, as against 2.3 per cent in the preceding biennium. A further 13 per cent of total outputs had been terminated, compared to 14.7 per cent.

22. Two partnerships had been crucial to the programme performance monitoring and reporting of the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS): one with the Programme Planning and Budget Division and the other with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The latter partnership had resulted in a new version of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS). That continuing team work was now focusing on the development of results-based modalities, the strengthening of data collection methods, and training in all aspects of self-monitoring, as well as on the development of an even more effective version of IMDIS.

23. The work on results-based management was not resource-neutral, as had been recognized by the General Assembly in paragraph 20 of its resolution 58/269. Further improvements required investments both in the departments and offices and at the central monitoring and reporting point. Consideration would have to be given to the best structure and the extent of such resource inputs.

24. *Mr. MacKay (New Zealand) took the Chair.*

25. **Mr. Elkhuizen** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro) and, in addition, Iceland, noted that, for the first time, the Committee was considering the strategic framework, which had replaced the medium-term plan. It would also be examining some of the biennial programme plans and other reports in respect of which CPC had been unable to conclude its consideration.

26. The European Union welcomed the new format of the strategic framework, in particular the plan outline, which gave a helpful long-term description of the challenges facing the United Nations and, when taken in conjunction with the two-year programmes in Part Two, provided a balanced perspective. The European Union stood ready to take note of the outline and

recommended that, when discussing the item, the Fifth Committee should confine itself to reaffirming the priorities identified in previous medium-term plans.

27. The preliminary results of the biennial programme plans were satisfactory. The majority of plans contained an appropriate level of detail, particularly considering that they would not become operational until 2006, but more specific and quantifiable indicators, targets and baselines should be added to the fascicles in 2005 during the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. The favourable response of a number of senior programme managers to the new two-year time frame augured well for an enhanced planning process. A few specific programmes remained to be finalized and, in that connection, the European Union looked forward to receiving expert input from the relevant Committees.

28. While the European Union stood ready to endorse the report of CPC on its forty-fourth session, it once again felt disappointed by the final product. General Assembly resolution 58/269 should have marked a new beginning for CPC, but the report contained familiar and repetitive language about modifying objectives, accomplishments and indicators of achievement and, in many cases, simply duplicated previously-used text. In addition, all the more difficult issues had been referred to the General Assembly for action.

29. The European Union was even more concerned that the Committee had ignored the General Assembly's instruction, in its resolution 58/269, to improve its working methods. Urgent corrective action was now required if CPC was to be viewed as a worthwhile body and wished to make an active contribution to efficient programme planning. The European Union therefore intended to put forward a number of modest proposals for the reform of its working methods during the relevant informal consultations, with a view to liberating CPC from restrictive interpretations of its mandate and encouraging more open, substantive debate on programmatic issues and evaluation.

30. Lastly, the report of the Secretary-General on priority-setting (A/59/87) helped to highlight the difficulties associated with defining priorities other than those that reflected general trends of a broad sectoral nature, and demonstrated that resource allocation was a very crude instrument with which to measure relative priorities devoted to particular programmes. The ability of intergovernmental bodies to order priorities at the programme and subprogramme level was limited and there was little point in revisiting the issue year after year. Consequently, the European Union proposed that the General Assembly should conclude its consideration of the question by taking note of the Secretary-General's report.

31. **Mr. Kovalenko** (Russian Federation) commended CPC for the preparation of the draft strategic framework for 2006-2007, which represented a first attempt to formulate the Organization's goals and tasks for a two-year rather than a four-year period. The process of reviewing the format and content of the programme plan was a complex and multifaceted exercise and, in that connection, it was particularly important to seek optimum planning paradigms for results-based performance in order to enable the Organization to respond more coherently to new challenges, provide for greater accountability on the part of the Secretariat and evaluate the indicators of achievement according to the established goals and end results.

32. Unfortunately, the strategic framework before the Committee did not always allow for the latter. A gulf had emerged between the formulation of goals involving both the Secretariat and Member States and the formulation of the expected accomplishments involving the Secretariat alone. In order to improve matters, the goals should be formulated more clearly. Furthermore, the concept of the "collective responsibility" of Member States and the Secretariat for the implementation of the goals contained in the framework should be eliminated, since it implied that neither side was ultimately responsible. Where the successful achievement of programmes depended on the contribution of Member States, a specific statement to that effect must be made, and in all other cases it should be assumed that responsibility lay with the Secretariat, which must be held fully accountable for its actions.

33. While the planning and management of results-based programmes was an extremely complex task, a comparison of the medium-term plan for 2002-2005 and the strategic framework for 2006-2007 revealed that, while the expected accomplishments differed, the action to be taken by the Secretariat to achieve those accomplishments was practically identical. It was difficult to comprehend how new results could be

achieved with old measures and, to rectify the situation, the Secretariat must devote more attention to assessing its role and to ascertaining how the upcoming period would differ from the previous one.

34. Lastly, CPC had an important role to play in the context of planning and evaluation. However, in order to make a real contribution to improving the strategic framework by, inter alia, providing Member States with clear recommendations, it must find its own niche in the process.

35. **Ms. Ebbesen** (United States of America) said that her delegation generally endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Programme and Coordination. However, for a number of reasons, it was deeply disappointed. Firstly, CPC had not fulfilled its mandate in the area of improving its working methods, failing once again to devote sufficient time or attention to the issue. Some delegations had been unwilling to consider even minor changes to its working methods. Secondly, CPC had not provided the Secretariat with strategic analysis or guidance regarding the new strategic framework and had recommended only editorial changes to the text. If CPC was to gain the confidence of Member States, it would need to take a different and more proactive approach in future. Thirdly, the Committee had been unable to agree on the programme priorities for the biennium 2006-2007. The biennial programme plan did not adequately address efforts to combat terrorism; that topic should be treated as a separate priority in order to reflect the threat it posed to the international community. Lastly, the role of CPC had been diminished on account of its failure to agree on a number of programmes and the subsequent deferral of their consideration to the substantive Committees of the General Assembly. In that connection, the Fifth Committee should be in a position to approve a number of outstanding fascicles that had been reviewed by, inter alia, the First Committee and the Fourth Committee.

36. The United States welcomed the new format of the programme performance report for 2002-2003, in particular its focus on results achieved, and commended the Secretariat for providing an electronic version. However, the length of the report and the lack of baseline data to measure the performance of programmes meant that its utility was limited. A significant portion of the indicators of achievement for 2002-2003 had been prepared without baseline data, which made it difficult for Member States to assess the results achieved. Consequently, future reports should include baseline data for all the indicators of achievement and the Secretary-General should continue to explore ways of streamlining and modernizing the report.

37. With regard to the report on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/59/79), her delegation took the view that monitoring and evaluation were crucial to the development of a results-oriented Organization and therefore commended OIOS for its thorough review of the Secretariat's monitoring and evaluation capacities, despite a lack of cooperation from some departments. It fully agreed with OIOS that each department should assess its current evaluation capacities, develop or update evaluation plans simultaneously with programme budget proposals and allocate sufficient time and resources to evaluation activities. Furthermore, senior managers should receive in-depth training in self-evaluation techniques and should be actively involved in reviewing the results of evaluations.

38. **Mr. Nair** informed members of the Committee that electronic copies of the report contained in document A/59/69 (on CD-ROM) were available in the conference room.

Agenda item 118: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*) (A/59/359 and A/58/785)

39. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China under agenda item 119, which had touched on the review of the mandate of the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). She commended OIOS for its efforts to instil a greater sense of accountability throughout the United Nations. The importance of effective oversight mechanisms had been illustrated by the large number of OIOS reports submitted to the General Assembly during the period under review and by actual savings of $26.6 million as a result of the implementation of OIOS recommendations. The recent increase in the number of requests for OIOS studies and reviews also clearly demonstrated Member States' confidence in the competence and independence of the Office.

40. OIOS should also be commended for attempting to effectively rationalize its allocation of resources and improve the targeting of its oversight assignments by applying a risk-management framework to its annual work plan. It was hoped that that framework, which had already facilitated cross-disciplinary teamwork, would further strengthen and add value to oversight activities. The efforts made to improve coordination between the various oversight bodies, in particular the Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit, were encouraging and should be pursued.

41. Her delegation welcomed the improved format of the annual report of OIOS and took note of the efforts the Office had made to streamline it by including only the more significant and specific recommendations, thereby decreasing the number of recommendations issued during the period under review. The relevant OIOS clients were urged to implement its recommendations without delay and to ensure that the necessary steps were taken to prevent future recurrences. To that end, the proposed establishment within the Secretariat of a high-level coordinating mechanism to ensure that managers were held accountable for the implementation of OIOS recommendations merited careful consideration.

42. Her delegation attached particular importance to the activities of OIOS in the areas of safety and security, procurement, the management of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian and related activities. In that connection, it remained deeply concerned about the findings relating to, inter alia, incidences of sexual abuse and exploitation, poor management controls, inadequate staffing and allegations of fraud. Remedial action must be taken to ensure that such incidents did not hinder the effective functioning of the Organization both at Headquarters and in the field.

43. Lastly, her delegation took the view that the effective functioning of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was essential and hoped that the OIOS audit of the regional commissions would further enhance its role. In 2002, ECA had been charged with overseeing the coordination of activities concerning the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) among regional United Nations entities and had subsequently made considerable progress in aligning its activities and programmes with the goals and priorities of NEPAD and other internationally agreed development goals. It was hoped that the findings of OIOS would contribute to further improvements in the management and efficiency of ECA. In that connection, her delegation would be seeking additional clarification regarding the rationale for, and the implementation modalities of, some of the relevant recommendations during the informal consultations.

44. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that General Assembly resolution 48/218 B constituted a delicate balance which must be preserved during the next review exercise which would focus on the strengthening of OIOS. It was in that context that her delegation did not support the extension of the term of office of the Under-Secretary-General.

45. The Office's balance sheet was generally positive after its first 10 years. Her delegation welcomed its self-evaluation but requested clarification of the Secretary-General's proposal for a review of its operations by a panel of outside experts. Such a review could be carried out by the Joint Inspection Unit. Her delegation would also welcome information in a formal meeting as to the intergovernmental decision and/or rule under which such reviews were conducted. It took note of the Office's proposal concerning its operational independence. More information about how the Office had determined the category of recommendations classified as critical to the Organization would also be welcome.

46. The OIOS report did not state what action had been taken to correct the Secretariat's inefficiencies and the lack of integrity of some staff members which it described. The results of the Office's investigation of the matter of the cockpit voice recorder, described in paragraph 42, were in fact incredible. Her delegation could not understand how such a mistake could have been made. Such cases cast doubt on the integrity of the Organization, and the conduct of the staff members concerned should be examined rigorously by the Secretariat. There was clearly a need for a mechanism by which the Secretary-General could report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the recommendations of OIOS and for a system of accountability.

47. It was regrettable that the OIOS audit of field security procedures had not been concluded before the submission of the Secretary-General's report on the security and protection of the staff under item 108. Her delegation would welcome information as to when that

report would be available and how the Secretariat intended to act on its recommendations.

48. Her delegation was very concerned about the Office's conclusion that the permanent staff capacity of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had been set below the required level. That violated the principle that resource levels must be consistent with mandates. A specific reply from the Secretariat on that point would be welcome.

49. It was regrettable that in some cases the OIOS continued to make recommendations which went beyond its terms of reference and trespassed on the prerogatives of intergovernmental bodies, despite the General Assembly's criticism and in violation of resolution 54/244.

50. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) said that OIOS played a crucial role in establishing and maintaining budgetary discipline, managerial prudence and a culture of accountability. The Organization should ensure the full implementation of its recommendations.

51. The Office had identified the management of peacekeeping operations as a high-risk area. Given the size of the budget of such operations, a robust oversight function was absolutely essential. With regard to another high-risk area, his delegation looked forward to the findings of the audit of field security procedures at 14 peacekeeping missions and 6 political and peace-building missions.

52. His delegation urged OIOS to continue to improve its useful programme performance report and to focus even more sharply on results.

53. The self-evaluation conducted by OICS was welcome, and his delegation was ready to discuss the issue positively so that the General Assembly could provide guidance on ways of enhancing transparency and operational independence. His delegation would welcome clarification as to why the Secretary-General had suggested a review by a panel of outside experts at a time when a review of OIOS activities was being conducted in the General Assembly.

54. The recommendations contained in the OIOS report on the audit of the regional commissions (A/58/785) should be implemented expeditiously in order to make their work more effective.

55. **Mr. Al-Zaabi** (Oman) drew attention to the statement in paragraph 32 of the report of OIOS (A/59/359) that only part of the sum approved for the procurement of strategic deployment stocks (SDS) for peacekeeping operations had been committed by 30 June 2003 and that part of the procurement action had not begun until 30 June 2004. Moreover, $5 million of the approved SDS budget had been diverted to uses not specifically included in the budget. Note should therefore be taken of the recommendations of OIOS concerning the need for compliance with General Assembly resolutions and for more expeditious implementation of the SDS programme.

56. As OIOS had stated, the risks associated with the administration of the Secretariat's human and financial resources included inefficiency, administrative duplication, complex bureaucratic procedures and practices, and inadequate maintenance and updating of regulations and rules. Many administrative processes in the Secretariat continued to be manual, cumbersome, time-consuming, inefficient and costly to administer. The Secretariat should therefore make an effort to make more effective use of modern information and communication technologies in order to achieve the results that the Member States expected.

57. The OIOS audit of the United Nations Compensation Commission's processing of selected claims had identified several deficiencies which had resulted in overcompensation to the claimants. Some errors had been accepted by the secretariat of the Compensation Commission, while other deficiencies that had been found in the audit had not been accepted. The latter included deficiencies in the claims process, such as overlapping claims resulting in double compensation; failure to consider cost savings; currency exchange and calculation errors; claims calculated on the basis of insufficient evidence; and inadmissible claims. The Secretariat and OIOS should therefore monitor the work of the United Nations Compensation Commission to ensure that its accounting procedures were improved and the number of mistakes reduced so as to avoid the wastage of resources.

58. Recent OIOS audits of United Nations regional commissions had found, inter alia, that their intergovernmental bodies needed to constantly review their adherence to rules. Inconsistencies and weaknesses in the self-evaluation exercises carried out by most of the regional commissions had also been noted and needed to be corrected. OIOS had also recommended that the Economic and Social

Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Africa should evaluate the new decentralized statistics arrangement in consultation with Member States, the Statistics Division and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Acceptance of those recommendations would lead to greater consistency between the budget proposals relating to the regional commissions and would improve the quality of their output.

59. In conclusion, he said that the 2002-2003 biennium had witnessed a considerable success in the Organization's activities, which included the conclusion of new international agreements in all its priority areas and reliable mechanisms for monitoring their implementation and enhancing national and regional capacities to translate such commitments into reality. Peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building capacities had also been strengthened and humanitarian assistance had been provided to tens of millions of people in need. The assistance that had been provided in the development of economic and social policies, capacity-building and advice on policy choices would support sustainable development and help to protect the environment.

60. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that whatever OIOS had achieved had been achieved through teamwork. He looked forward to the informal consultations, where it would be for the Secretariat to answer most of the questions raised.

61. **Ms. McCreery** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), responding to the suggestion by the representative of the United States that there was an apparent contradiction between the description of the investigation of allegations of sexual harassment in UNHCR in paragraph 87 of the OIOS report and the Secretary-General's decision to take no further action in the matter, said that there was in fact no contradiction. The Secretary-General had broad discretion in determining what constituted misconduct by a staff member and in imposing disciplinary measures. On the completion of any investigation, the staff member concerned was given an opportunity to respond to the allegations. The Secretary-General could then decide to close the case, refer it to a joint disciplinary committee, or summarily dismiss the staff member.

62. The Secretary-General had reviewed the OIOS report and evaluated its recommendations and the responses of the staff members concerned, taking into account all the circumstances of the case. He had decided, within his discretionary authority, that the allegations could not be sustained. On 4 November, the Joint Appeals Board at the United Nations Office at Geneva had been informed by the complainant's legal counsel that she was withdrawing her appeal.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.